

DOE Weekly Field Memo – August 26, 2009

From the Department of Education:

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- **H1N1 Continuity of Learning Guidance from USDOE**
- **FY2011 Special Education Service Plan**
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- **Press Release: SAT, AP, ACT Exam Results Released**
- **Committee on the Financing and Effectiveness of the Vermont Education System in the 21st Century**

From the Department of Health:

- **H1N1 Letter to Parents (Attachment)**

H1N1 Planning Update for Vermont Schools

Audience: All

Within the next two weeks, administrators will receive a letter from Health Commissioner Wendy Davis and Education Commissioner Armando Vilaseca regarding plans for school-based clinics for the H1N1 vaccine. As you know, school-aged children are a target group nationally for this voluntary vaccine, which is expected to be available in mid-October. Commissioner Davis will be seeking schools (public and private) interested in collaborating with the Health Department to provide vaccine to students in the school setting. In the meantime, superintendents will be receiving phone calls from their [district health offices](#) on this topic.

For the latest information on H1N1 and schools, visit <http://www.healthvermont.gov/panflu/SwineFlu.aspx>.

Contact: Health Department: Deb Wilcox at (802) 652-2051 or dwilcox@vdh.state.vt.us; Education Department: Jill Remick at (802) 828-3154 or jill.remick@state.vt.us

H1N1 Continuity of Learning Guidance from USDOE

Audience: All

On Tuesday, Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan, Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, District of Columbia Mayor Adrian Fenty and District of Columbia Chancellor of Public Schools Michelle Rhee joined with officials from Google, Apple, Microsoft, Scholastic Inc., Pearson, Curriki, and the International Association for Online Learning to announce new recommendations on the continuity of learning in the event of students absences or school closures due to seasonal or novel H1N1 flu. Visit [H1N1 Continuity of Learning Guidance from USDOE](#) for more information.

FY2011 Special Education Service Plan

Audience: Superintendents, Special Education Administrators and Business Managers

The FY2011 Service Plan forms, instructions, worksheets and cover memo are now available. The service plan provides the department with the estimated special education costs for FY2011 so the department can calculate the appropriation needed for special education and to provide revenue estimates to school districts. The service plans are due on October 15th. For more information visit

http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_finance_sped.html#service.

Contact: Margaret Schelley at (802) 828-5119 or at margaret.schelley@state.vt.us

Educator Reporting Requirements (Child Abuse and Neglect; Vulnerable Adult Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation; and Educator Licensing); and Access to Child and Adult Abuse Registries

Audience: Superintendents, Principals and Heads of School

This memo is an annual reminder of the duties of educators to report abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults, and to report educator misconduct that could result in suspension or revocation of educator licenses. Also included is information about gaining access to the child and adult abuse registries maintained within the Agency of Human Services for the purposes of your employment searches. Visit http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/mainpubs.html#reporting_requirements.

Contact General Counsel Mark Oettinger, (802) 828-3135, mark.oettinger@state.vt.us or Gregory Glennon, (802) 828-5100, gregory.glennon@state.vt.us

Administrator Handbook: Information to be Included in School Reports, Handbooks and Other Notices

Audience: Superintendents, Principals and Heads of School

This document provides information on requirements for local school districts to publish annual school reports and other information that must or should be included in school handbooks or other documents. It includes the statutory and regulatory source and whether the underlying legal requirement directs a particular format. The list will be reviewed annually and updated or supplemented as needed. See the memo at <http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/mainpubs.html#handbook>. Omissions from or possible additions to this list are welcome and should be submitted to Mark Oettinger, Vermont Department of Education General Counsel, at (802) 828-5103 or mark.oettinger@state.vt.us or to Greg Glennon at (802) 828-5100 or gregory.glennon@state.vt.us

Press Release: SAT, AP, ACT Exam Results Released

Audience: All

Vermont student results on the SAT, AP and ACT exams were released yesterday. To read the complete release, visit http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/press_releases.html.

Contact: Jill Remick at (802) 828-3154 or jill.remick@state.vt.us

Committee on the Financing and Effectiveness of the Vermont Education System in the 21st Century

Audience: All

The Committee on the Financing & Effectiveness of the Vermont Education System in the 21st Century was convened by the Vermont Legislature "to examine potential improvements to the structure and funding of the Vermont educational system in light of the state's limited financial resources." For more information, including membership and materials, visit

http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/laws/legislative_committees/ed_system_financing_effectiveness.html.

Contact: Cindy Lee at (802) 828-0770 or cindy.lee@state.vt.us

From the Department of Health:

H1N1 Letter to Parents (Attachment)

Audience: Principals, Superintendents, School Nurses

The Vermont Department of Health has created the attached letter to parents, in Word, for administrators to use in communicating to parents about H1N1. Also attached are Fact Sheets specifically for parents of school-aged children. School nurses will be receiving this information directly from the Health Department as well. If you have any difficulty with PDF files and links, please call your local Health Department office for a copy.

Contact: Emily Pastore, VDH School Nurse Liaison, at (802) 863-7281 or EPastor@vdh.state.vt.us

Weekly Field Memo is Online!

The DOE Weekly Field Memo is archived on the Department of Education Web site at http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/field_memo.html. Field Memos and the corresponding attachments are available for download. For Field Memo information three months or older, or for other questions, please contact Jill Remick, communications director, at (802) 828-3154 or jill.remick@state.vt.us.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For the Department of Education Web site see: <http://education.vermont.gov/>. For upcoming events or professional development opportunities, see the DOE Calendar of Events located at:

<http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/calendar.html>.

Main Department Line: (802) 828-3135

NOTE: For comments or questions specific to the messages above, please contact the person listed. DO NOT reply to this message.

This Field Memo is posted weekly by the Department of Education to better organize our e-communications to the field. There may be times when separate messages from the department will still be sent.

September 2009

This letter contains important information from the Vermont Department of Health.

Dear Parent:

Only a few months ago we were alerting you about the novel H1N1 or “swine flu”.

This new flu is still circulating in Vermont and across the states, and has especially affected school-age children. As you may know, flu can be easily spread from person to person. For this reason, schools are taking actions to reduce the spread of the usual seasonal flu and this new flu. We want to do everything we can to keep children safe and keep them learning during this flu season.

Here’s how you can help to keep flu from spreading:

- **Teach your children good health habits and set a good example yourself.** Wash hands often and well with soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand rub. Cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue. If there is no tissue, coughing into a sleeve or elbow is better than coughing into hands. Don’t share personal items like drinks, food or unwashed utensils. Stay home when you’re sick.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Your child may have fever (100 degrees or more), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- **Keep sick children at home for at least 24 hours** after they no longer have a fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. Keeping sick children at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.
- **Do not send sick children to school – or to the library or any public place.** Any child who is determined to be sick while at school will be sent home. Plan now for how you will keep sick children home and away from others.
- **Get vaccinated.** There won’t be a vaccine for the new flu until later this fall, but everyone is encouraged to get vaccinated against the regular seasonal flu this year, so we have a better chance of keeping students, teachers, staff and families healthy. When the vaccine for the 2009 H1N1 flu is available, school-age children will be among the first to be offered vaccine. There will be more information to come as details are worked out.

Attached is more information about the flu, with action steps for parents to use this school year. You can also go to www.healthvermont.gov, www.flu.gov, or dial 2-1-1.

the flu



A Guide for Parents

What is the flu?

The flu (influenza) is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs that is caused by influenza virus. The flu can spread from person to person. Most people with flu are sick for about a week, but then feel better. However, some people (especially young children, pregnant women, older people, and people with chronic health problems) can get very sick and some can die.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

Most people with the flu feel tired and have fever (usually high), headache, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and sore muscles. Some people, especially children, may also have stomach problems and diarrhea. Cough can last two or more weeks.

How does the flu spread?

People that have the flu usually cough, sneeze, and have a runny nose. This makes droplets with virus in them. Other people can get the flu by breathing in these droplets, getting them in their nose or mouth, or touching contaminated surfaces.

How long can a sick person spread the flu to others?

Healthy adults may be able to spread the flu from 1 day **before** getting sick to up to 5 days **after** getting sick. This can be longer in children and in people who don't fight disease as well (people with weakened immune systems).

How can I protect my child from the flu?

A flu vaccine is the best way to protect against the flu. CDC recommends that all children from the ages of 6 months up to their 19th birthday get a flu vaccine every fall or winter (children getting a vaccine for the first time need two doses).

- Flu shots can be given to children 6 months and older.
- A nasal-spray vaccine can be given to healthy children 2 years and older (children under 5 years old who have had wheezing in the past year or any child with chronic health problems should get the flu shot).

You can protect your child by getting a flu vaccine for yourself too. Also encourage your child's close contacts to get a flu vaccine. This is very important if your child is younger than 5 or has a chronic health problem like asthma (breathing disease) or diabetes (high blood sugar levels).

Is there medicine to treat the flu?

There are antiviral drugs for children 1 year and older that can make your child feel better and get better sooner. But these drugs need to be approved by a doctor. They should be started during the first 2 days that your child is sick for them to work best. Your doctor can discuss with you if these drugs are right for your child.

What Can **YOU** Do?

How else can I protect my child against flu?

1. Take time to get a flu vaccine and get your child vaccinated too.
2. Take everyday steps to prevent the spread of germs. This includes:
 - Clean *your* hands often and cover your coughs and sneezes
 - Tell your child to:
 - Stay away from people who are sick
 - Clean hands often
 - Keep hands away from face
 - Cover coughs and sneezes to protect others (it's best to use a tissue and throw it away).

What should I use for hand cleaning?

Washing hands with soap and water (for as long as it takes to sing the *Happy Birthday* song twice) will help protect your child from many different germs. When soap and water are not available, wipes or gels with alcohol in them can be used (the gels should be rubbed into your hands until they are dry).

What can I do if my child gets sick?

Consult your doctor and make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks a lot of fluids. If your child is older than 2 years, you can buy medicine (over-the-counter) without a prescription that might make your child feel better. Be careful with these medicines and follow the instructions on the package. **But never give aspirin or medicine that has aspirin in it** to children or teenagers who may have the flu.

What if my child seems very sick?

Call or take your child to a doctor right away if your child:

- has a high fever or fever that lasts a long time
- has trouble breathing or breathes fast
- has skin that looks blue
- is not drinking enough
- seems confused, will not wake up, does not want to be held, or has seizures (uncontrolled shaking)
- gets better but then worse again
- has other conditions (like heart or lung disease, diabetes) that get worse

Can my child go to school if he or she is sick?

No. Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid giving the flu to other children.

Should my child go to school if other children are sick?

It is not unusual for some children in school to get sick during the winter months. If many children get sick, it is up to you to decide whether to send your child to school. You might want to check with your doctor, especially if your child has other health problems.

When can my child go back to school after having the flu?

Keep your child home from school until his or her temperature has been normal for 24 hours. Remind your child to cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing, to protect others (you may want to send some tissue and wipes or gels with alcohol in them to school with your child).

Action Steps for Parents to Protect Your Child and Family from the Flu this School Year

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 4 main ways you and your family may keep from getting sick with the flu at school and at home:

1. **Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
2. **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder; not into your hands.
3. **Stay home if you or your child is sick** for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.
4. **Get your family vaccinated** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.

If flu conditions become MORE severe, parents should consider the following steps:

- ▶ **Extend the time sick children stay home** for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have completely gone away.
- ▶ **If a household member is sick, keep any school-aged brothers or sisters home for 5 days** from the time the household member became sick. Parents should monitor their health and the health of other school-aged children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.

Follow these steps to prepare for the flu during the 2009-2010 school year:

- ▶ Plan for child care at home if your child gets sick or their school is dismissed.
- ▶ Plan to monitor the health of the sick child and any other children in the household by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- ▶ Identify if you have children who are at higher risk of serious disease from the flu and talk to your healthcare provider about a plan to protect them during the flu season. Children at high risk of serious disease from the flu include: children under 5 years of age and those children with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma and diabetes.

- ▶ Identify a separate room in the house for the care of sick family members.
- ▶ Update emergency contact lists.
- ▶ Collect games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained if schools are dismissed or your child is sick and must stay home.
- ▶ Talk to your school administrators about their pandemic or emergency plan.

For more information:

- ▶ **Visit: www.flu.gov**
- ▶ **Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day**
 - 1 (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)
 - TTY: (888) 232-6348
 - cdcinfo@cdc.gov

Action Steps for Parents of Children at High Risk for Flu Complications

Children with chronic health problems such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, metabolic conditions, neurologic and neuromuscular disorders, or who are pregnant are at higher risk of having complications from flu. In addition, all children younger than 5 years old are at higher risk of flu complications compared to older children. If you are not sure if any of your children are at higher risk for flu complications, please check with a doctor.

Keep children at high risk for flu complications from getting sick with the flu

- ▶ ***Make sure your child's hands are washed*** for 20 seconds with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after coughing or sneezing.
- ▶ Have your child ***cough and sneeze into a tissue*** or into his or her elbow or shoulder if a tissue is not available.
- ▶ ***Keep your child away from people who are sick.***
- ▶ ***Clean surfaces and objects that your child frequently touches*** with cleaning agents that are usually used.
- ▶ When there is flu in your community, consider your child's risk of exposure if they attend public gatherings. In communities with a lot of flu, ***people who are at risk of complications from flu should consider staying away from public gatherings.***
- ▶ If flu is severe in your community, talk to your doctor and child's school to ***develop a plan on how to handle your child's special needs.***
- ▶ ***Get your child vaccinated*** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.

Recognize if your children are sick

Some children may not be able to tell you about their symptoms, which can result in a delay in responding to their illness. It is important to watch carefully for the signs and symptoms of flu or unusual behavior that may be a sign your child is sick. Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, and fatigue. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). If you are not able to measure a temperature, your child might have a fever if he or she feels warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.

Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include:

- ▶ Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- ▶ Bluish or gray skin color
- ▶ Not drinking enough fluids

- ▶ Not urinating or no tears when crying
- ▶ Severe or persistent vomiting
- ▶ Not waking up or not interacting
- ▶ Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- ▶ Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- ▶ Sudden dizziness
- ▶ Confusion
- ▶ Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Please share this information with your child's teacher or other caregivers, so they can tell you if they notice your child is not feeling well.

Tips for taking care of high risk children with the flu

- ▶ **Contact your doctor immediately if your child is sick.** This is important because the antiviral medicines used to treat flu work best when started within the first 2 days of getting sick. Your doctor will tell you what special care is needed for your child.
- ▶ **Keep your sick child at home** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keep your child home unless they need to go to the doctor.
- ▶ **Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks clear fluids** (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants, Pedialyte®) to keep from being dehydrated.
- ▶ **If your child has a fever, use fever-reducing medicines that your doctor recommends** based on your child's age. Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) **should not** be given to children or teenagers who have flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
- ▶ **Keep your sick child in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick child.

For more information:

- ▶ **Visit: www.flu.gov**
- ▶ **Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day**
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 - cdcinfo@cdc.gov

Action Steps for Parents if School is Dismissed or Children are Sick and Must Stay Home

- ▶ Be prepared to support home learning activities if the school makes them available. Your child's school may offer web-based lessons, instructional phone calls, and other types of distance learning. Have school materials, such as text books, workbooks, and homework packets available at home.
- ▶ Have activities for your children to do while at home. Pull together games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained.
- ▶ Find out if your employer will allow you to stay at home to care for sick household members or children dismissed from school. Ask if you can work from home. If this is not possible, find other ways to care for your children at home.
- ▶ If school is dismissed, monitor the school's website, local news, and other sources for information about returning to school.

Tips for taking care of children (and other household members) with the flu

- ▶ **Stay home if you or your child is sick** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others. Stay home even if taking antiviral medicines.
- ▶ **Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after coughing or sneezing.
- ▶ **Keep sick household members in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick person.
- ▶ **Monitor the health of the sick child and any other household members** by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). If you are not able to measure a temperature, the sick person might have a fever if he or she feels warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.

Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not urinating or no tears when crying
- Severe or persistent vomiting

- Not waking up or not interacting
 - Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
 - Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
 - Sudden dizziness
 - Confusion
 - Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- ▶ ***Check with your doctor about any special care*** needed for household members who may be at higher risk for complications from flu. This includes children under the age of 5 years, pregnant women, people of any age who have chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people age 65 years and older.
 - ▶ ***Have the sick household member wear a facemask*** – if available and tolerable – when sharing common spaces with other household members to help prevent spreading the virus to others. This is especially important if other household members are at high risk for complications from flu.
 - ▶ ***Ask your doctor about antiviral medicines or fever-reducing medicines*** for sick household members. Do not give aspirin to children or teenagers; it can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye’s syndrome
 - ▶ ***Make sure sick household members get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids*** (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.

If your health department says that flu conditions have become more severe

- ▶ ***Extend the time sick children stay home*** for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away.
- ▶ ***If a household member is sick, keep any school-aged brothers or sisters home*** for 5 days from the time the household member became sick. Parents should monitor their health and the health of other school-aged children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.

For more information:

- ▶ **Visit: www.flu.gov**
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